133 At this time each of the creeks was at its height; they are deep and rapid, and four of them much wider than Tulé river.[15]

The condition of the country between the territory of the Wukchumni and Gawia on the Kaweah River and that of the tribes on Kings [312 River was much as it is now (save for oases of ●311] agriculture made possible by modern irrigation), and the region seems to have been without native villages, the area probably being used only for hunting and seed-gathering.

On the 15th and 16th of May, Derby's party completed the crossing of the Kaweah sloughs (the "four creeks"), left the Cowees (Gawia) on the 17th and headed for Kings River.

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[134 ... our course lay over a barren sandy plain, interspersed here and there with spots of vegetation, but in general a perfect contrast to the rich soil upon the river Francis [the Kaweah]. About 6 miles from the fifth creek we observed four isolated hills or buttes about six hundred feet high, two of them ranging nearly north and south, and about two miles apart. At the first of these is a constant spring of water....We arrived upon the banks of the Kings River at about 5 P.M., having travelled 23.66 miles in a direct line across the plains.[16]

After a day spent on Kings River, probably at about the present site of Centerville, having ridden up the north bank about fifteen miles and having talked with one or two white men established at the ferry, Derby wrote as follows.

The Kings River is the largest stream in the valley, at this time of spring floods about three hundred yards wide, with a rapid current and water cold as ice. It is about sixty miles in length, rising in two branches high up in the Sierra, which uniting about forty miles from its mouth flow in a southwest direction through the hills and valley, and empty into the Taché [Tulare] lake at its northeast extremity. Its banks are high and well timbered, and the country in its immediate vicinity is apparently fertile. It forms five sloughs like the Francis, but they are much wider and the country between them is swampy and difficult of access. There are no less than seventeen [16] rancherias of Indians upon this river, number- 36] ing in all probably about three thousand, including those situated among the hills of the [648 vicinity. Of these those living upon the low- 181] er part of the river are friendly and well disposed toward the whites; those high up among the hills are entirely ignorant, treacherous and mischievous I was informed by Colonel Hampton, at the upper ferry, that the Cho-e-minee [Choinimni] rancheria, situated in his

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[15] Ibid., 257.

[16] Ibid., 258-260.

133 and feed the great tular. To the west of its central waterway was barren ground little used [224 save for rabbit drives by the Tachi; to the 311] east was the fertile land watered by snows of the Sierra Nevada and shaded by the magnificent roblar, the great oak forest. Barren land spots were uninhabited, for as yet the great valley was not overpopulated and seed and game were plentiful. No famine nor wars for food are reported by the natives.

133 22a It will be seen that the dwellers about the lake and its fringe of swamp or tular had a very different environment from those of the tree filled foothills. Yet nowhere was the food quest a problem. Nothing could be more misleading than labeling the people of the San Joaquin Valley, whether the Yokuts lake tribes, the tribes of the foothills, or the Monachi of the mountains, "seed-gatherers" or "seed-eaters," as though their diet were preponderantly vegetarian.

133 136 Fish and water fowl abounded in the lake region, supplemented by ground squirrels, rabbits, and antelope from the near-by plains. In the foothills and mountains rabbit, squirrel, quail, pigeon, dove, and deer were the commonest meats. Early travelers, Spanish and American, testify in open amazement to the plentiful supply of game constantly at hand.[22] Acorns [262] and seeds are not to be discounted as less important than meat, but they were not more important in daily diet.

262 The tabu on meat or grease which was enjoined at all times of religious or spiritual stress was not thought of as a personal sacrificial abstention because of the preciousness of meat: rather, meat and grease were substantial nutritious foods, ever at hand, and were to be omitted like the solid seed foods in order to attain that peculiar exalted physical condition brought about by fast or by the mechanical emptying of the stomach with tobacco and lime. Lack of food, whether meat or vegetable, did not constitute one of the hardships of life for the Yokuts and Western Mono.

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[22] Example of abundance: in the vicinity of Tomshi Valley (Tokod-Wukshumni territory) four men shot 300 quail in two days. Visalia Record, vol. 3, Nov. 7, 1861.